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Mediaeval Chinese Currency*

THE work entitled the "Ch'üan Pu T'ung Chih" is a treatise on the currency of China, compiled in that country between the years 1816 and 1833 by Mêng Lin. It discusses Chinese coinage from the earliest times to the date of the book, and describes and reproduces in facsimile paper money varying in date from issues of the T'ang Dynasty, 650 A.D., to issues of the Ming Dynasty in 1425.

Specimens of a number of these notes formed in 1915 the subject of a communication by Mr. Andrew McFarland Davis to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and have since been kindly given by Mr. Davis to this Museum. At Mr. Davis's instance, Mr. Kojiro Tomita has translated the sections of the work referring to paper money, and the translation has now been published by the Academy with a foreword by Mr. Davis. Mr. Tomita has added a number of explanatory notes.

The paper currency of China described in the "Ch'üan Pu T'ung Chih" testifies to the vigorous and ordered life of the Chinese Empire during a period stretching from the deepest night of the Dark Ages in Europe to the dawn of the Renaissance. The author of the treatise remarks that the Kao-tsung currency of 650 A.D. is of a more excellent workmanship than any other. In a general way the notes reproduced resemble in shape and size the bank-notes of Europe, with the notable difference that they are higher than they are broad instead of broader than they are high. On the other hand, it is the direction of the text, as with us, that has determined their oblong shape. In text and ornament the notes differ characteristically from European currency. The text makes no promise of payment, but names the coin value of the notes and announces its issue by the appropriate authority, and often for military purposes. Almost invariably the counterfeiter is threatened with decapitation and the informant offered a stated reward. Instead of our dry phrase "This note is a legal tender," the authorization reads: "To be current under the heavens," as befits an issue of the Celestial Empire; and on a certain note appears the humane benediction "Peace be unto men and horses." The notes vary in color from ours: sometimes yellow, sometimes gray. The ornament is conceived in a wholly different spirit from that of European currency. Instead of conventional patterns interspersed with an occasional portrait or historical scene, it consists of the greatest variety of motives, many familiar also elsewhere in Chinese art—the dragon, clouds, flowers, articles of ceremony, plum blossoms with the cracked ice that symbolizes their early bloom. Illustrations

of coins in bunches or on ribbons are also frequent.

For English readers Mr. Tomita's translation casts a fresh ray of light upon the most ancient of existing civilizations. The study of Chinese customs in every minutia was never so important as at the present moment when the ends of the earth are joined together in a common purpose to defend each its own peculiar heritage.

Indian Essays*

IN a recently published volume entitled "The Dance of Siva," the author of the foregoing article on Rajput Painting, Keeper of Indian Art at this Museum, has discussed from the standpoint of the East, but for Western readers, a number of topics relating to the thought and life of India. Several of the essays have been rewritten from articles contributed to the *Burlington Magazine*, the *Athenaeum* and other periodicals. A conspicuous mark of the Indian endowment and training of their author appears in the broadly philosophic spirit in which all are written. The introductory essay reveals the goal of the book in the form of a summary of the contribution of India to human welfare. "If it be asked what inner riches India brings to aid in the realization of a civilization of the world, then, from the Indian standpoint, the answer must be found in her religions and her philosophy, and her constant application of abstract theory to practical life." "But let it be clearly realized that the modern world is not the ancient world of slow communications; what is done in India or Japan today has immediate spiritual and economic results in Europe and America. To say that East is East and West is West is simply to hide one's head in the sand." "What has to be secured is the conscious co-operation of East and West for common ends, not the subjection of either to the other, nor their lasting estrangement." "What is needed for the common civilization of the world is the recognition of common problems, and to co-operate in their solution." Among these common problems, that of the theory of beauty is discussed from the Hindu point of view in the following three essays. In another, entitled "Indian Images with Many Arms," a characteristic of Indian art which is very puzzling to most Western eyes is studied as a general problem of iconography. From the essay which gives its name to the book it appears that, though Siva is the destroyer, his dance is no Dance of Death, like that of mediaeval German art, but the obverse of that gloomy picture, a celebration of cosmic activity. Other essays are devoted to Hindu music, to the position of women and the conception of love in India, and to thoughts of a general kind upon social order. Many and charming plates at once embellish and interpret the text of the book.

*Extracts from the "Ch'üan Pu T'ung Chih." Translated into English by Kojiro Tomita, Assistant Curator of Chinese and Japanese Art at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston; contributed to the Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences by Andrew McFarland Davis, with a foreword by Mr. Davis. Proceedings: Vol. 53, No. 7; June, 1918; 181 pages with 158 illustrations.

*"The Dance of Siva." Fourteen Indian Essays by Ananda Coomaraswamy. New York, 1918. The Sunwise Turn, 2 East 31st Street. 8vo, pp. 139, with 38 plates.